

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. An electronic control unit for automatically activating a parking brake in a motor vehicle startable without a mechanical key, wherein said electronic control unit automatically activates the parking brake in dependence on at least one specified operating parameter of the motor vehicle, said operating parameter for the automatic activation of the parking brake being a shutting-off of an internal combustion engine of the motor vehicle.

2. The electronic control unit according to claim 1, wherein said electronic control unit includes means for arbitrarily preventing an automatic activation of the parking brake, said means being arbitrarily triggerable by a user of the motor vehicle.

3. The electronic control unit according to claim 2, wherein said means for arbitrarily preventing comprises a key button, connected with said electronic control unit, said key button being directly manually actuatable in the form of an OFF switch for arbitrarily preventing the automatic activation of the parking brake.

4. The electronic control unit according to claim 2,  
further comprising:

an electronic authorization verification device  
having a wireless code transmission operatively arranged in  
the motor vehicle to start the motor vehicle; and

wherein said means for arbitrarily preventing  
comprises a holding shaft in which the authorization  
verification device is inserted for triggering arbitrarily the  
prevention of the automatic activation of the parking brake.

5. The electronic control unit according to claim 3,  
further comprising:

an electronic authorization verification device  
having a wireless code transmission operatively arranged in  
the motor vehicle to start the motor vehicle; and

wherein said means for arbitrarily preventing  
comprises a holding shaft in which the authorization  
verification device is inserted for triggering arbitrarily the  
prevention of the automatic activation of the parking brake.

6. A method for automatically activating a parking brake  
in a motor vehicle startable without a mechanical key, the  
method comprising the acts of:

determining an operating mode in which an internal  
combustion engine of the motor vehicle is being shut-off; and

automatically activating the parking brake in dependence on the determined operating mode, said parking brake being automatically activated when the internal combustion engine is being shut-off.

7. The method according to claim 6, further comprising the act of preventing arbitrarily an automatic activation of the parking brake.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein said act of preventing arbitrarily the automatic activation of the parking brake comprises the act of directly manually actuating an OFF switch in the form of a key button for triggering arbitrarily the prevention of the automatic activation of the parking brake.

9. The method according to claim 7, wherein the act of preventing arbitrarily the automatic activation of the parking brake comprises the act of inserting an authorization verification device having a wireless code transmission into a holding shaft in the motor vehicle, said inserting act triggering arbitrarily the prevention of the automatic activation of the parking brake.